



"Sun" Comes Out in Charlotte Harbor

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Charlotte County, Florida

Charlotte Harbor, FL - Hurricane Charley came to Charlotte Harbor one Friday, with winds up to 114 mph, leaving the community stunned. Buildings were destroyed, and streets were filled with debris and downed power lines. While the storm was swirling through town, 30 newspaper employees braved the storm at their office unable to get home. They were dry and secure because the structure was built to resist strong winds and the windows were fitted with storm shutters.



In the mid-1990s, Richard Hackney, Vice President of Operations, lobbied the stockholders for storm shutters to protect the *Sun* newspaper building in Charlotte Harbor. His experience with Hurricane Andrew taught him that an investment in protecting and strengthening the building against intense storms would pay big dividends by reducing future repair costs and wasteful downtime while waiting for repairs. The shareholders agreed, and the shutters were purchased for \$15,000. In the previous nine years, the shutters have been put up five times. During 2004, three times. According to Hackney, "Of all the storm events, Hurricane Charley has been the shutters' most severe test; as yet, the building has not sustained any serious damage."

When installed, storm shutters maintain building integrity by protecting the windows from direct wind pressure and windborne debris. If flying debris breached large office windows, wind driven rain could enter and cause the loss of valuable computers containing information on news stories, research, subscribers, and other files. Without that information they could not go to press. Intense winds coming in through these windows would cause "uplift" pressure on the roof system. Pressure inside the building along with the speed of the wind above the roof surface, could lift the roof causing catastrophic damage to the building, its contents, and anyone working inside. An adjacent building of similar size and construction, without storm shutters, lost its roof and most of the siding. In fact, it sustained so much damage the business was not operational, and had to be relocated.

According to David Dunn-Rankin, President of the *Sun*, "The shutters helped keep the roof on and kept us operational. If we had lost the roof...I don't know...it's frightening. Lost revenue, subscriber credits, computer replacement, press equipment repairs or replacement and production outsourcing all add up. We could have been looking at \$3 million to get us back to where we could put out the paper here."

The entire Charlotte Harbor area was without power, but even that did not stop the *Sun* from publishing. The paper was without power for 14 days. However, because the building integrity had been maintained, they were otherwise operational. Instead of shutting down, they hooked up a rented, 1750KV generator, and published the newspaper. "We didn't miss a beat," said Dunn-Rankin.

"It's not just about the dollars, it's about publishing," said Hackney. It's not even an option not to publish. We have to be able to protect our people, our building, our presses, and maintain our capacity to publish. We met our goal." The *Sun* came out on the Monday following Charley's hit on Friday.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Florida**

County: **Charlotte County**

City/Community: **Charlotte Harbor**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**
Hazard Type: **Flooding; Hurricane/Tropical Storm**
Activity/Project Type: **Retrofitting, Non-structural**
Activity/Project Start Date: **09/1995**
Activity/Project End Date: **09/1997**
Funding Source: **Private funds**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$15,000.00 (Actual)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **2004**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/nhp/index.shtm>
Reference URL 2: <http://www.sun-herald.com/weather/hurricaneSecuringTheExterior.cfm>

Main Points

- Storm shutters purchased and installed (before a storm hits) to protect office building.
- If flying debris breached large office windows, wind driven rain could enter and cause the loss of valuable computers containing information on news stories, research, subscribers, and other files.
- The entire Charlotte Harbor area was without power, but even that did not stop the Sun from publishing. The paper was without power for 14 days. However, because the building integrity had been maintained, they were otherwise operational.